

Spring 2014

Zephyr: The Fifteenth Issue

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ZEPHYR

15

th issue
spring 2014

the university
of new england's
journal of
artistic
expression

ZEPHYR

the fifteenth issue · spring 2014



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Welcome, wild North-easter!
Shame it is to see
Odes to every Zephyr;
Ne'er a verse to thee.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

ZEPHYR

THE FIFTEENTH ISSUE / SPRING 2014

the university of new england's journal of artistic expression

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the fifteenth issue of *Zephyr*!

Thank you to all those who have contributed and submitted to this year's issue. Without your help and support, *Zephyr* would not be possible. Your efforts have ensured the continuation of an important artistic space that promotes and encourages creative expression free from constraints.

We hope you enjoy this year's edition, and continue to support *Zephyr* in the future. Thank you again.

– Katie Labbe

Voices in the Wind

Jack Williams

The place is sacred.
The place is desperate.
The community is imploding.
The children are dying.

The wind carries the voices
of desperation and hope
across the prairie.

The wind whispers, "Listen."
Listen to the spirits,
Listen to the people,
Listen to the elders.

Listen to your heart.
Then you will know
what to do.
At the right time.

Edge of Oblivion

Megan Totten

If you can stand
On the very brink of insanity
At the sight of the cold body
Of a loved one once wracked with pain
And knowing that they are free
Choose to step back from that edge of oblivion
Not wishing them back into this world
A thousand times a day . . .
Then you are stronger than I.



Michelle Pellegrino

The Sun

Alanna Sachse

The Sun, a Laugh, the Memories.
Can you imagine it?

A Breeze, a Whisper, the Ghost.
Can you sense it?

The Rain, a Cry, the Jokes.
Are you listening yet?

The Thunder, a Scream, the Locks.
Can you hear it?

A Storm, a Stare, the Arrow.
Can you feel it?

The Flames, a Smile, the Mask.
Can you see me yet?

The Sovereign Nation of Foxbridge, MA (Excerpt)

Hillary Cusack

When I shut the door against the windy street, all I could think about was my stomach. I took a few small steps up to the counter of the tiny café and asked the cashier,

"Do you have any suspended coffee?" For an answer, I got a confused twitch of her brow. Damn. I tried again, wincing, "Coffee on hold? Stuff other people have paid for?"

"Oh," she said with an understanding smile, "I don't, but you can have some anyway. How do you take it?"

I took it with surprise. She didn't look to be the freely giving type. Her dark hair was pulled back into a tight bun like a ballerina, far neater than I'd ever been able to manage. Her glasses cocked slightly to one side, which gave the impression that she often leaned to the right and was compensating. Usually the ones who gave me something, either from the soup kitchens or the side of the road, wore the hair-flowing, baggy-jeans look.

"Black, thank you," I answered, and she twirled around to the whirring machine. I stood by the register to wait. Outside, the fierce New England wind was whipping a sign over the door which read "The Café Noir." Glancing around the inside, I wondered if a similar wind had created the cluttered mess. The small room looked like one of those places designed to have "character," with steel beams purposely exposed and the brick walls left bare, but instead it looked storm-ravaged. And the books. There wasn't a surface of the coffee shop not covered with books. Packed shelves went up almost to the high ceiling, and there were messy piles of paperbacks on every table. The only other patron was a single gentleman in an old, wool pea coat. He had surrounded himself with muffin crumbs and small scraps of paper as he wrote diligently in a moleskine notebook, sneaking quick glances in my direction every so often when he thought I couldn't see. I'm sure I was a sight.

"Here you are, hun," the woman said, bringing my attention back to the counter by handing me a steaming mug and a small pastry. "You can stay as long as you like. You a reader?"

I shrugged. People meant different things by that. I took the coffee and donut as I guided my giant backpack through the overflowing tables to a small, wooden chair in the back corner away from the windows. Owners don't appreciate clearly homeless people as front window displays.

When I finally got settled to take off a few of my many layers, the man in the pea-coat swiveled around to face me.

"So. How long you been tramping?" he asked, his face straining away from his neck as if trying to get a better look at me.

I flipped him my finger without looking at him as I took my first sip of coffee. My eyes slipped closed as I felt the warmth spreading through my chest. I hadn't had a cup this good since before leaving home, at least.

"I didn't mean to offend," the man said, as he cleared his throat, "I just figured not many people carry around a backpack that big and so you must be on the tramp."

I sighed and gave him a good, hard glare, not even blinking. Prolonged eye contact is enough to shame people into looking away, usually. He maintained his composure though, and after a few more seconds I answered back without breaking eye contact, "Fuck off."

"What'd I do?" The man cried, twisting away, "I just wanted to know! How long have you been homeless, is that such a hard question?"

"Not everyone likes to talk as much as you, Hal," the barista's voice came from behind the counter amid the sounds of glasses clinking under the faucet.

"I'm writing a book, Ellie, you know how valuable first person narratives can be. The plight of the homeless in Foxbridge! How am I supposed to write about it if no one will tell me?"

"Try it yourself," I muttered under my breath before taking a swig of the burning, black liquid.

Hal puffed out his chest at this, "As a matter of fact, I've already tried that. But the nuns wouldn't let me into their shelter because they knew I had a house. But I did sleep on the bench in front of the library a few times."

I tried not to snort out my coffee. It was something about the way his brand new loafers would look stretched out underneath a blanket of newspapers, I thought.

"And on top of that," Hal continued, unaware of how ridiculous he sounded, "the food bank never has enough food. The poor things that rely on it, it breaks my heart. How can life be so cruel? If only George Orwell were still alive." He paused for a moment, as if inviting me to ask what Orwell had to do with poverty. I didn't, but he continued, "Orwell was mere months away from solving the entire poverty situation in England before his untimely death. He always had such a soft spot for the proletariat's predicament. He went out tramping just like you for a few years. Nearly killed him."

My coffee was almost gone at this point, for which I was grateful. I'd keep in mind to avoid this place in the future. Ellie had come out from behind the counter, wiping the tables free of crumbs and straightening the books.

"It's my life's goal to be this generation's Orwell, you know," finished, now aware that he was talking to himself.

"If you ask me," I said shouldering my layers and pack as I stood to go, "you're more like a Thoreau than an Orwell." I brushed past him and headed towards the door.

Hal stood up, disturbing all the pieces of paper around him and creating a small, indoor blizzard. "What do you mean by that? Thoreau was a coward!" His eyes were blazing. If he hadn't pissed me off so much, I'd probably laugh at his self-conceived righteous anger. He was like a small squire pretending at knighthood.

I parried his words with a thrust, "Thoreau spent half his time living with the Emersons and the other half with his mother while claiming to be 'au natural.' Yeah, it's cowardly, which sounds just like you. You won't leave Foxbridge to find out what homelessness is like. Orwell went down and out in Paris and London. You can't be bothered to leave your backyard."

The room went quiet. Hal's mouth made small movements like a contestant in a spelling bee preparing his letters, but the words never came. When I realized I'd succeeded in shutting him up, I turned around and placed the mug in the empty 'dirty' bin. Ellie was standing agape with a dishrag hanging limply from one hand. When we made eye contact she began to clap.

"Oh that was fantastic! I can't tell you how long I've wanted to do that," she said. She gave Hal and his fluttering papers a glare which broke him from his open-mouthed stupor. Getting on his hands and knees, he started to pick up the small pieces of paper and place each within a fold of his notebook. The woman came over to me.

"What's your name? If you don't mind my asking."

I brushed some of the hair out of my face. "Leah," I said with my eyes on the door, itching to go. My back was already groaning under the strain of my pack, and I wanted to get a move on towards the nun's shelter Hal had mentioned.

"You need to stick around here, Leah," the woman said, trying to catch my eye, "We need a literate woman around here to keep Hal in line."

I nodded without conviction and inched my way towards the door, hoping she'd stop talking. But Ellie stopped me instead.

"Leah, wait. I should ask you something." Something in the way she was looking at me told me stay, so I sighed and let my pack slump to the floor, but I felt exposed without the weight on my shoulders. I crossed my arms and rocked backwards.

"I've got this bad knee here," she said, pulling up the hem of her skirt to reveal a tightly wrapped brace cutting into the skin of her shin. "I was wondering, if you're not otherwise employed, if you'd like to help me out here? I need someone to help with the lifting, and on busy days, I can't just run around and wait tables like I used to."

A job. She was still smiling too much and being too friendly, but it was a job. "When do you want me?"

Ellie's face broke out in a huge smile before she started listing the responsibilities and hours and tasks while pointing in three directions at once. I tried to keep up, but honestly was only half listening. A job. No one had been half so kind to me yet.



Jessica Healy

A Temporary Dwelling

Kyrstal Filsinger

to reside
on the side
of Curley Road,
where the sun sets
and the sun rises,
as a personal painting collection;
sacred storage,
stored beneath
silent, slanted
eye holes,
as an unassigned
assignment,
an un-assessed
assessment --
emerges;
although,
not one as the other,
to increase,
stabilize,
then decrease,
this twice daily dosage--
never to neglect
the
artist's
praise.



Michelle Pellegrino

If I Die Before I Wake

Tyler Meunier

If I should die before I wake,
I pray the lord, my soul to take.
And raise me up, high above,
To watch over my one true love.
And let not a moment go
That she forgets, or doesn't know
That though my heart and mind
May far be left behind,
My soul remains the same.
And till her final flame
Has met its last goodbye,
I shall be waiting in the sky.
Until the day that I can see
Her eyes starting back at me.
We'll get lost on cloud nine,
And once again she will be mine.

Untitled

Erin Viens

blood curdling screams of a nightmare
taunting every image of my thoughts
my dreams that are still awaiting the release
I see dancing painting
of the man I continuously see in the mirror in front of me
I hear his cry
yet every time I turn around to lend a hand
he vanishes
with just a cloud of dust to linger
in the place he once stood



Raymond Nill

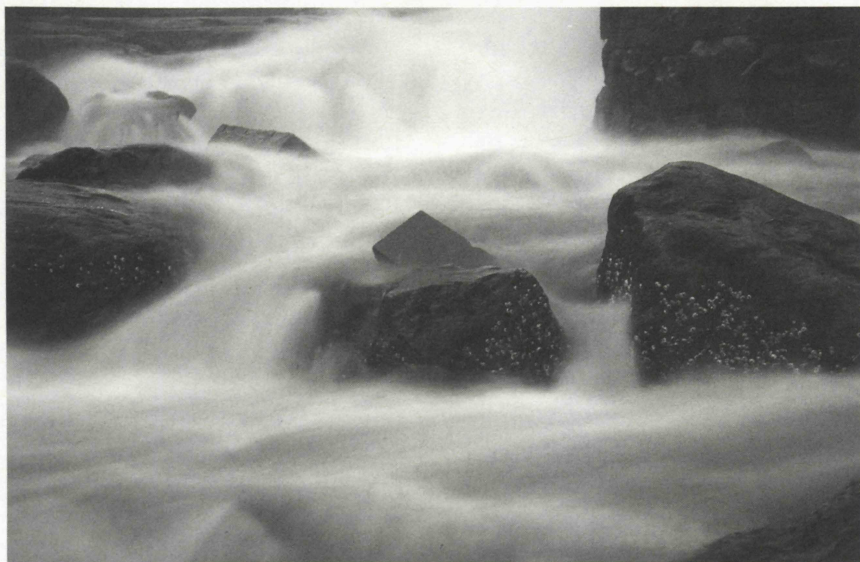


Michelle Pellegrino

Dancing King

Linda Bresnahan

Swift movements
Across the carpet,
Emotional to
The beat
Passion in
The eyes,
But fire in
The feet.
Step after step
As exciting as
The first.
This music is
What quenches
The thirst.
I feel something like never before.
My eyes glazed with thrill,
And mouth perched
With much allure
Stomach filled with a pit
This pit so new
I must admit
It's fresh
Exciting
Thrilling
As the music slows
The feet
And toes
Come to a
Halt
After a
Perfect spin
I realize what the pit
In my stomach is.
A new found thing
With the dancing king.



Michael Fillyaw

Hue

Christina-Claire Georges

Am I defined by the skin that I am in?
You never see color when everyone looks like you
You never question your value
When everyone around you is the same hue
Why now do I realize that my color could be killer?

My color never defined me
Never let me know my place
Never seemed to oppress my dreams
Or distort my reality

But somehow it is
My color is now apparent
Among the sea of similarity I am different.
My hue makes me question when before all I had was answers

From birth, color never had meaning. Unless,
There were crayons in my hand
and a Disney princess on the page.
Color was the only way that books caught my attention.

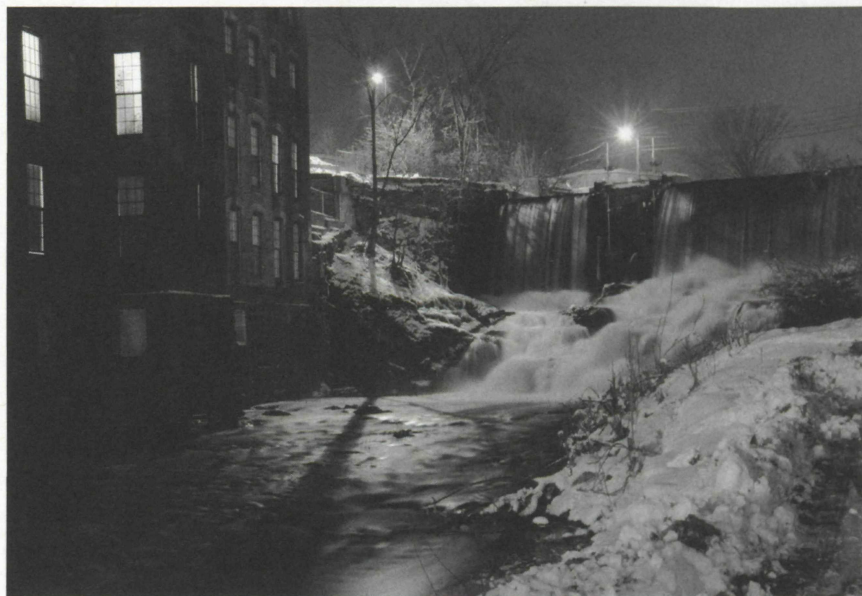
Pretty pictures all painted the same
But color is much more
Among the sea of the same I am different
Color is different.

Now I am questioning.
Now I no longer feel
as though I am a spectator
Now I seem to fear the hue

Fear the difference
How do I deal with this newness?
How do I face my hue?

My color, it scares me.
It undoes all that I feel.
I can not stand the mirror shattering on reality,
How do I deal ?

All I know is the sea of the same
But now I am different.
How do I know the reality or the fallacy
My hue makes me question?



Jessica Healy

A Ripple in Time

~ Lin ~

Though the wind blew lightly the water lay still
Reflecting so clearly the trees and a hill
When the breeze blew along the rocky beach
Reflections distorted each tangled in each
The ripples crowded that tiny lake
Pushing into some from others they take
Sparkles of diamonds kisses from the sun
Pushing together, gently becoming one
If each were a person you could define
Laughing at the thought which would be mine?
Pushing forward pulling back no reason or Rhyme
Here for a fleeting moment 'a ripple in time'



Raymond Nill

Never Leave

Jack Williams

From my perch in the 747,
their relationship appears uneasy,
two worlds awkwardly aligned,
Restless.

One has stark corners,
an imaginary ownership
of delusional dreams,
Frowning.

Another is flowing and wandering playfully
in carefree, meandering loops and circles,
dancing through the checkerboard below,
Singing.

The decrepit elder waves me closer,
etching images in my imagination,
forever carved in my still searching spirit,
Whispering,

The rocks, the wrens, the rascals...
The babbling brook and the inferno...
All are your family, your relatives...
Sacred.

Live and never leave the circle.
Round the corners of the squares, and
Draw the others in as an eagle
Circling,

Soaring with the heavens, keenly watching.
Build sturdy nests for earthly relations
known, but for your fleeting mortal eyes, yet
Unseen.

Birch Trees

Anonymous

We could not escape
the winter storm

so we curled up with flashlights, blankets
and candles
as Cold dug her long fingernails into the flesh
below freezing
and by morning,
her small white thumbprints
had ossified all the trees
into glass-blown skeletons.

Dad was heartbroken over one birch
in the yard.

Its proud spine curved all the way to its roots,
imprisoned in a prayer.

"If we can't save it," he said. "it's going to snap."

Sometimes I dream about white granules
freezing onto my bones
after they've hatched
like insects
from my medicine capsules.
When I wake up, I swear Cold
is crawling inside of me.

If you stop the medicine, Mom warns,
you'll jeopardize your health.

Outside the window

Dad is striking the birch with broomsticks
and hot water.

I can't look away.

Eight thumb-sized capsules
plus strangled enemas
by the nightstand.
The sickness

is getting worse.

What else can I do?

The trees are breaking.
Their cries for help shatter
with branches in the snow.

Dad is on his third broomstick now.
A cascade of icicles sings to the ground.
I reach out
to the window
to offer her my warmth.



Michael Fillyaw



Michelle Martel

Double Cross

Kaylee Doyle

I could feel the hot sand beneath my feet, each pebble making its way between my toes. I scooped up the sand in front of me and slowly walked back over to where Jillian was. I took my time, soaking in the radiant sun, feeling its warmth on my skin. It was my favorite kind of day, a day when nothing in the world mattered but the sand between my feet, the sun on my face and my family. I dumped the sand right on top of the last pile I had gathered. Her favorite part of coming to the beach was being buried, but the part she loved even more was breaking out of the sand once she was completely buried. She would always yell out "I'm free, I'm free!" as she burst through the trillions of warm pebbles engulfing her body. I always wondered why she loved it so much.

The moment I awoke from this beautiful dream, I could not help but let my emotions get the best of me; I burst out in tears simply letting them engulf every feature of my face. Chester squirmed his way from underneath the covers and popped his head out, big blue-gray eyes staring up at me; he ran toward me, tripping over the complexity of the crumpled covers. As he made his way to me, he jumped right on my belly, licking every little nook where the tears had fallen.

"Good morning, Ches!" I exclaimed through a mini fit of giggles I had erupted into due to his constant warm licks to my nose.

As I sat up in bed, I could feel that it was going to be one of those days. I reached for the bottle on my bedside table labeled "Zoloft 20 mg" and underneath saying "Take one per day with water". I then proceeded to pop two into my mouth and wash them down with my saliva. As I sat there, I could not help but think about the kisses that I used to wake up to. Soft and warm, filled with a love that could not and cannot be broken; such an amazing way to say good morning...that is what I always thought as I rolled over and saw his glistening green eyes staring into mi-

Chester jumped onto my lap, interrupting my thoughts. It's as if he knew. With the pills kicking in, a little too much, I made my way to the bathroom and began my ever exciting routine of getting ready.

I made my way to work and stupidly dared to turn on the radio for the first time in a while. They would always play the worst possible song that would evoke the memories I did not want to recollect, no matter how wonderful they were but today, today would be different, worse even. I turned the station to 99.8, seemed like a safe bet...but I was beyond wrong. The man on the radio was talking about exactly what I did not want to think about. His deep, raspy voice speaking their names shot right through me like a 6.5 artillery gun's bullet.

"Today marks the five year anniversary of the death of Michael Brennan and the tragic disappearance of Jillian Bransfield as a result of a bank robbery---"

I couldn't possibly listen any longer...a bank robbery, you would think the CIA would be at least a little more original than that. If anybody had only known what had happened—if Mum and Dad had known, well, I guess they would be right where I am. From here, I could not help it, I let my mind travel to the one place that I despised going back to.

There we were, the three of us in the warehouse of the organization we were sent to take down. The organization that laundered enough money to feed a third world country, the company that had enough nuclear weapons to replicate Hiroshima five times over and the organization that posed the biggest threat to the Central Intelligence Agency. The organization called Aliyev.

We had executed countless missions similar to this before but this time something went wrong so now there we were, surrounded by armed men, there were enough of them to form an army. All I could hear was the sound of the alarm that we had triggered, the screams of my sister and fiancé, the sound of my own voice begging them not to hurt them. But it all began to unfold so quickly, the men did not hesitate; they took action charging at us; they were on a mission of their own. She tried to fight back but she was out numbered. Michael fought back harder, he used all of his power to keep them from taking her. I was being restrained, held at gun point, held back just to watch

them take my sister away, to watch them beat down the man I loved. All I could do was scream her name over and over.

"Jillian! Jillian! Jillian! Leave her alone!" I begged.

I knew it was not going to do anything and I also knew that they would not hurt her, they needed her alive. Michael on the other hand was not so lucky. The moment he began to get the upper hand over the guards, they shot him. Point blank in the chest, three times. Just like all agents are trained to do. He never had a cha---

Once again my thoughts were interrupted by the sound of my cell phone humming its boring tune that it was originally set to. The caller ID said "Mum"oh boy.

"Hi Mum" I answered wearily.

All I could hear were soft sobs on the other end.

"Oh Mum...Mum, please come on, don't cry" I said, making sure to speak softly.

"Oh, baby, I'm so sorry" she managed to say, taking a deep breath.

"It's okay" I managed to lie.

"A-are you alright, do you need me?"

"No, Mum. I'm okay, I'm headed to work. I'll stop by later" I lied, once again.

I couldn't bear to see my parents today, of all days. It would kill me, as selfish as that sounds...I just, I can't. I tried to convince myself that not seeing them would be okay. I just couldn't bear to see her beautiful blue eyes swollen and wet, brightened by the tears that had been falling from them.

"Tori...why don't you just skip work today, I'm sure they will understand. It's going to be crazy there today sweetie, I'm sure the bank can do one day without you." she tried her hardest to convince me.

If she only knew....

"No, Mum. We can't keep running from this. What happened, happened. Michael is dead, he's never coming back and Jillian could be dead for all we know, there's nothing we can do!" I snapped even though I knew otherwise.

My breaking point and it was only nine in the morning.

"Oh God, I'm so sorry Mum. Please...I didn't mean that, I-I'm just---" I could not even finish, the tears trickled their way over the edge of my eye.

"Baby girl, don't be sorry. Just picture my arms around you. Shhh baby, it's okay" she whispered.

I gathered myself as I pulled into the parking lot.

"I gotta go. I love you Mum. Tell Daddy I love him to bikini bottom and back."

"I will, sweetie. Oh, and Tori...a bushel and a peck..."

"And a hug around the neck" I smiled as I said it.

I grabbed the tissues out of my dashboard, wiped the black that had ran down my cheek and reapplied the mascara that had been washed away....so much for waterproof.

Making my way through the front door of the local bank, I walked past the woman who always wears neon colored lipstick, the man who never fails to wear a purple tie and the man who walks with a limp and carries a dark blue cane...I've always wondered what happened. I walked all the way back to the last elevator in the corner where Dominique greeted me as always. Typing in 4589 on the key pad inside the elevator, I was moments away from entering a whole new world. As the elevator doors opened, I was greeted with the familiar sign plated in gold saying: Central Intelligence Agency: Headquarter A.

Walking through the office, I got these looks...the looks I was expecting. Amazing how such a small look of pity can say:

"Wow, I'm really sorry that five years ago today your sister was abducted by the USA's worst enemy and your fiancé was KIA."

Only here could you receive a look like that.

"Good morning, uh, Victoria...I, uh, I'm really sorry about uh—" he muttered uncomfortably.

"Thank you, Andrew." I cut him off, putting him out of his misery. Our newest here are always so nervous and naïve.

"Just a, uh, reminder that your debriefing for, um, the, ya know, is in five minutes" he began sweating.

"Yes, Andrew, thank you, I will be there in a moment"

I slowly turned and approached the conference room, it was already filled with agents. Agents that I was about to brief; the biggest debriefing of the CIA in years, and I was about to give it.

Letting the doors shut behind me, I started in, once again reliving the experience that ruined my life five years ago, using only words yet evoking every emotion of that day. Putting aside my vulnerability of this day and embracing that extra pill, I began.

"And now, here I am five years later lecturing all of you wonderful agents as to why the proper execution of this mission is vital to not only the CIA, but to me. We are taught not to make missions personal, not to have emotions but these sons of bitches stole my life from me, and it's time that I get it back. Thanks to the success of the agents on the mission in Moscow, we have retrieved a chip holding all of the data we need to expose them, to grant us permission to raid their base of operations. Tomorrow we will go into that warehouse and take down the most corrupt organization known to the United States once and for all."

What the other agents did not know is that my mission in all of this, my motive, was to take down Michael's killer, to find my sister like I had been trying to for the past five years, to escape this life and have a normal one. Whatever that means.

"Are you sure you are ready for this, Victoria?" asked Calvin, director of the CIA.

"I am more than ready, I need to start living again Calvin. I need to know that I have gotten justice----" I stopped for a moment, holding back the tears.

"I need to know that I have gotten justice for the man who used to be my everything, my absolute world. The one person---and my baby sist—She is still out there" I couldn't hold them back.

"Victoria, I can only imagine what you are going through today, what you have gone through since—I can only feel responsible for all of this.

I couldn't imagine if I lost my wife or my baby girl to something as fucked up as this. Tori, we are all going to die, live out this live and die, but we all deserve the write to die happy and peacefully. We will win this."

All I could do in response to this was hug him. The biggest bear hug I have ever gotten, aside from my Daddy's.

"Thank you" was all I could manage to say.

With that said, I turned and walked away, wiping my eyes once again, with only one thing on my mind.

I laid in my bed that night, thinking about the same things that I had mulled over for the past five years. I had always wondered what they needed Jillian for and if she was even still alive. I had tried to track her down in every way possible, using every resource the CIA provided but every lead I followed was a dead end. Granted, I was trying to uncover a secret held by Aliyev. Sometimes, I would even let my mind wander to the darkest places...what if it was all a set up? No—my baby sister would never do that. What if she is being forced to cooperate in exchange for her life, what if she has been tormented for all of these years? These were the questions that plagued my mind every single day and every single night for the past five years. Almost 1,825 days of inner torment, wondering and questioning. All of this really has made me realize what being alive means. It means something different to everyone but to me, being alive is a privilege. In this line of work, you are blessed to come back alive from each and every mission, blessed that you are required to keep this life from your family...they should never be a part of it. But, my sister was, the love of my life was. And now, they are gone. Their blessings run out.

And now, here I am leading a group of skilled agents into what could be the biggest battle and hopefully biggest victory known to the Central Intelligence Agency. My heart is racing, I am nervous and determined and excited. Kind of sick isn't it? That I'm excited for this.

On my signal, it would all begin. I counted down in my mind...five....four...three...two...one...

We charged through the steel door of the warehouse, guns in hand. It was just as I remembered it from years before. It sent a pang of sorrow through my body which then transformed into anger. I used every skill I had ever been taught to take down every one of these bastards I could. Punching, kicking, dodging, punching, kicking, dodging. I ran to the opposite side of the room, turned right down a long hallway, my true mission finally beginning. I had studied maps of this place for years, I knew it like the back of my hand.

As I turned another corner, I stopped right in my tracks because there he was, the man who shot Michael standing at the end of the long, dark hallway. It's not a face

I would ever forget. He saw me too, it was as if he knew I would be there. The eye contact we made was the most intense moment I have ever experienced, in a deep, belly wrenching hatred kind of way. And then suddenly, it was like I had no control over what my body was doing, I lifted my gun, my finger was on the trigger; so ready for revenge. So ready to avenge the death of the man I loved and the lost years of my sister's life.

But then I felt it. A gun pointed at the back of my head, it was something I was far too familiar with. I closed my eyes, a feeling of anxiety surging through my veins. But this feeling was nothing compared to what I felt when I heard her voice.

"Put the gun down, Victoria" she said.

I was speechless. This voice, a voice that I knew so well. One of the only voices I had wanted to hear for the past five years.

I slowly lowered my gun, hands and body shaking, mind racing with confusion.

"Come on, put the gun down" she said with a sick tone of sweetness in her voice.

I did as she said, I put the gun down. I put my hands in the air, in signal of some kind of surrender.

"You okay, honey?" she yelled to Michael's killer.

"Thanks to you, dear" he replied with an undertone of gratitude in his voice.

My mind was racing with pure confusion and enough anxiety to last a lifetime. With my hands still in the air and gun still pointed at the back of my neck, I slowly turned to face her. I couldn't believe it.

"Jillian?" I said, tears flooding my eyes.

"Hey sis."



Michelle Martel

99 Plain - Looking Back / Looking Down

Joseph Mahoney

A mutant Breed of Wiregrass
...Occupied a strip of lawn...

Between our house and Zeizer's hedges.

Thunderous opaque clumps grew here, so that a
Hand-pushed lawn mower went
Thump-dada-Thump, chewing at,
Beheading these brillo pads.

Our garage floor was
Just dirt.
A pulverized grayish powder.

On the walls hung by crooked nails was stuff:
A shovel... a rake... a spare hub cap
All was covered in a gray patina.

Up to the attic. Here the floorboards lifted easily,
Six by ones. Up, exposing the joists, they revealed a bumpy
landscape
Like Roads... ...
Gray again inviting you to run your truck

Zoom... Zoom... over the glassy hills.*

*Asbestos was rife in housing construction prior to World War Two



Mik Morrissey

Snowy Fun

Taylor Knapczyk

Snow is falling all around,
It's all I see covering the ground.
Impressions of feet scattered throughout,
Fall back, arms and feet spread out.

Fluffy power being blown,
Red faces and chattering teeth then shown.
Pure white mist whipping and whirling,
And just as fast it starts unfurling.

Crunching and cracking below my feet,
Then a slip, and the ground I meet.
With a laugh we resume,
On to the beach to consume
With ready eyes the wonderland
That has slowly covered all our sand.

Close to Me

Erin Viens

A shadow of imagination blocks my inner thoughts
feeling locked away where I can't grasp what I want most
catching the wind with my wings spread wide
wider than the unbalanced sea of my emotions
they run wild
like galloping horses across a grassy plain
never to be caught by the man chasing them
running faster and farther than ever before
my soul a whole of a half
my better half still amidst those unbalanced waves
forever shall I wait for him to join me
far beyond the horizon
patiently waiting with a cautious grin of uncertainty and hope
you can't fathom this conspiracy unless otherwise me
with no patience I restlessly sit like a duck unaware my wild horse is close to me
all that's left to do is run with the wind



Raymond Nill

Island

Krystal Filsinger

as
long mornings
tired legs
coffee stained
stains
painted sunrises
with more songs than
a mind could ever
sense
could ever smell
could ever
witness—
talk
to
the
world
for all else folds
as to assume a day
without a single breeze
stagnant.



Michael Fillyaw

Ocean Dreams

Linda Bresnahan

You close your eyes and dream of the sea
Standing alone in the ocean of sand
Watch as the tides rage temperament
The poetry of the earth is never dead.

Standing alone in the ocean of sand
How glorious a greeting the sun gives
The poetry of earth is never dead.
The blue beauty lives on

How glorious a greeting the sun gives
On this crystalizing water
The blue beauty lives on
And dancing waves take their final bow

On this crystalizing water
The moon radiates shine
And dancing waves take their final bow
When the sun sets for the day.

Skydiving

Erin Viens

Adrenaline pumping through my veins
The anticipation already started to show through my skin
We haven't even left the ground yet
Step by step they instruct us on what we had to do when the time came
All strapped into our harnesses
We waited and waited
We waited for what seemed like an eternity
But...the time finally arrived
As we started moving
Everything became still
The humming grew louder and louder
And I tried ever so diligently to listen
As we approached the door which was agape and awaiting our arrival
The climax of our journey was starting to form
Before we could take a breath
We were off
As we were to begin the takeoff
Of what was going to be the biggest phenomenon of our lives
10 thousand feet up
And I realized my life hung in the balance of a simple object
Sometimes prone to failure
I hesitantly turned around to be strapped in
To the only source of life support
But no longer nervous
There was no count down
Hands tucked

Shoulders in
Head back
And you're off
Sent swirling out into the sky
You're truly alive when you're so close to death
With the illusion of stillness
I looked upon the largest landscape portrait you have ever seen
30 seconds later
It's all over
And you're back on the ground
Where it started



Michelle Pellegrino

Untitled

Alanna Sachse

The Raven pecks at your fingers.
The Canary sings to your ears.

A lonely road it's forced to fly
A smile it brings to every eye.
The clouds alone know the sorrow fate
The sun's rays guide to a golden gate.

Bleak as rolling storm clouds in the distance
Bright as a budding flower's persistence.
Searching through a fog of seclusion
Floating in a valley of delusion.

The black wings cut through a night of mist
The yellow feathers flutter in a day of bliss.
Hidden in a shroud not even known
Revealed in light it does not own.

The Raven strides in truth.
The Canary cowers in lies.

Fiddleheadds

Jack Williams

Not yet fronds,
fiddleheads do not know
that they will unfurl
into splendrous ferns,
holding the floor of the wood.



Raymond Nill

What I Learned at College from the People That Couldn't Afford to Go

Anonymous

What I learned at college from the people who couldn't afford to go

Go to work
with your hearts on your uniform
to remember to be human.
Share life stories with strangers.

Good advice isn't always nicely wrapped up in words;
it can be a simple hug.

There's no such thing as crude humor
just humor.

A cigarette is nothing more
than a post-lunch cookie.

You don't need a degree
to crash on the couch
after a 12 hour shift
but you do need one
to say you worked hard.

You can have 3 jobs
and still need food stamps.

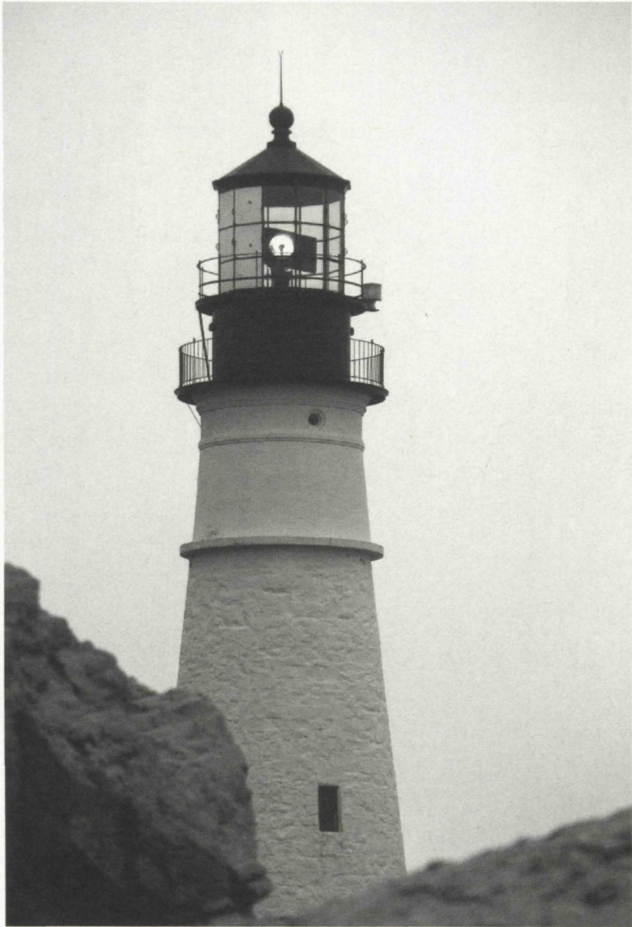
There's no such thing as a paid vacation.

They are mentors and teachers,
mothers and grandfathers;
they are bullied and oppressed
by a system that's grounded in justice.

So where is it?



Michelle Martel



Michael Fillyaw

Aspirations

~ Lin ~

When the air fills with warm sunlight

tiny buds break ground to see the sight

Nature permitting they'll flourish

sipping spring rain they will nourish

One bloom stands above the rest

she's proudly passing natures test

The glorious sun so warm and bright

she turns her head to follow the light

The bee that tickles and stings

carries new life within his wings

The hum from a bird so very tiny

with wings quick and shiny

While she gives her nectar for food

the humming cheers her mood

In her time she'll do her best

and limits given she will test

As the evening air grows cold

all her petals she will fold

Now the garden is fading away

how she longs for yesterday

Flowers once stood at her side

under fallen leaves they hide

Like flowers now withered and brown

the cold earth is pulling her down

The garden once full of cheer

seems never to have existed here

Colors gone to brown and gray

shall return in spring, so they say

She'll fight death, commit treason

If only to see one more season

Still reaching for one more chance

to feel the wind, and dance

Though she knows her time is passed

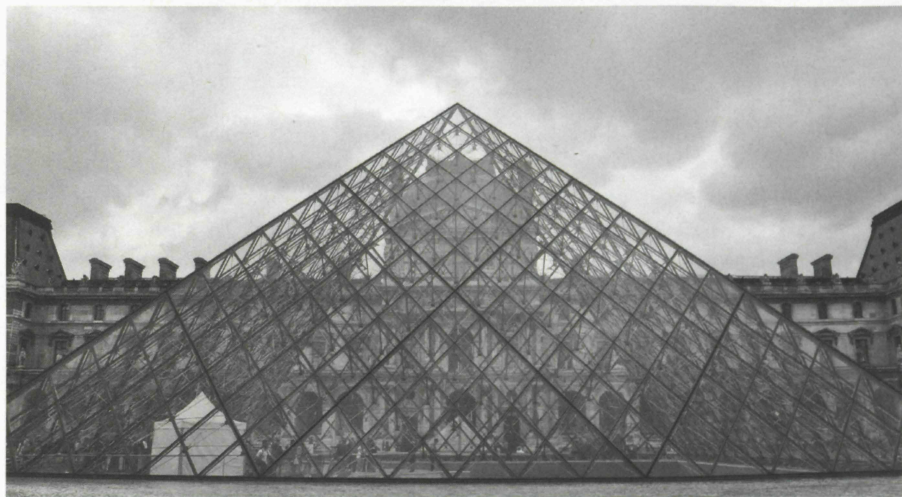
her roots still strong will last

barely peeking through leaves of brown

under those leaves she soon will drown

Yet somehow beneath the earth

she senses a chance of rebirth



Michael Fillyaw

Poetry, Art, Music, Nature

Taylor Knapczyk

Poetry, Art, Music and Nature.

This is all I need.

Without them the future looks bleak,

What would I do, shrivel and become meek?

A line or two from W.W. and I'm revived,

With a feeling that only my soul can describe.

Verse or prose it doesn't matter,

Raw emotion, a canvas with paint splatter.

The feeling focuses the image,

And it becomes clear.

It's not the literal but what's underneath

Into that, an artist can sink their teeth.

Like a song that you can't help to sing,

It just feels right in the moment.

Overcome with a feeling that you can relate,

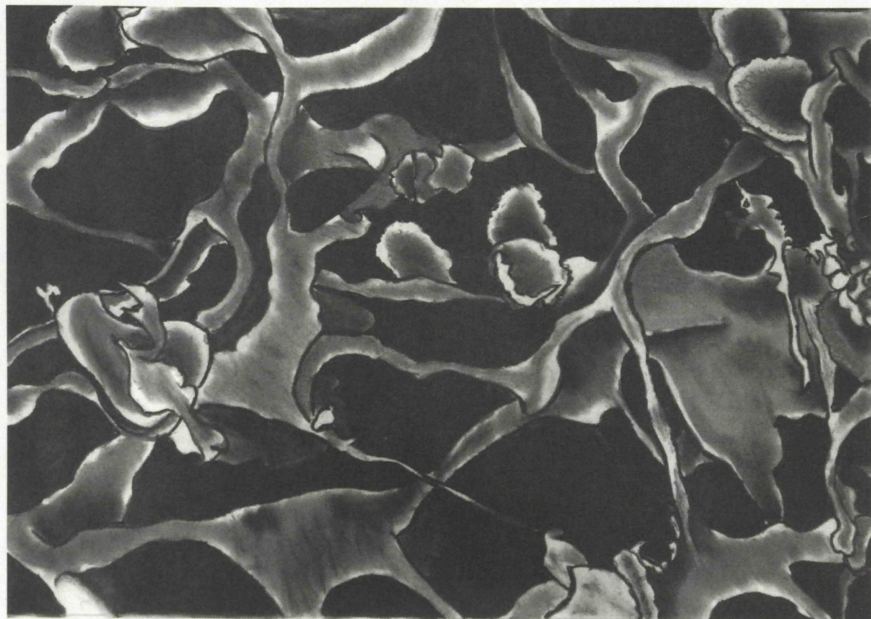
Music helps keep each day straight.

Though at the end it's Mother Nature,

Who's always there waiting patiently.

Holding all the beauty in the world,

For each of us, a different story to be unfurled.



Christopher Glover

Sweaty Thoughts

Krystal Filsinger

It is a foreign place
overgrown with strands of
familiarity.
old sounds
New voices
languages as
power.
forbidden new ways
songs of old days
time runs as long as
as long as
the only single road
upon this island.
fumes
as smoldering through
simple thoughts
and
changing times.
unwind

for
there
are
no
secrets.

Night Owls

Megan Totten

Come on out my fowl friends
And fly down the streets with me
Remember that the world is ours at night
And we can possess it
In this hour we can see only shapes
So while the moon bleeds out the color
We will fill it in again with our mind's eye
Open them wide and peer out
While the others sleep safe
Burrowed down deep hiding from
Our sharp talons of ideas
We will create the hoot
That future owls will repeat
While the others dream sweetly in their beds
We will cough up the bones of society
That we never wanted to swallow
Nowhere in the Bible does it say I have to be
In bed before midnight
Cinderella's Godmother is not one of us.
Those day-dwellers will never understand
The beauty of the carpet when it's only lit
By the nightlight plugged into the wall
And they will never fully appreciate
Those infomercials that last an hour
Trying to make me fit, fat, or buy that rare buffalo coin
They will never sit and ponder

"Why can I only buy 10 coins when I saw this commercial two months ago?"

So flock around me, fellow Night Owls

And together . . .

We can call them and ask.



Raymond Nill



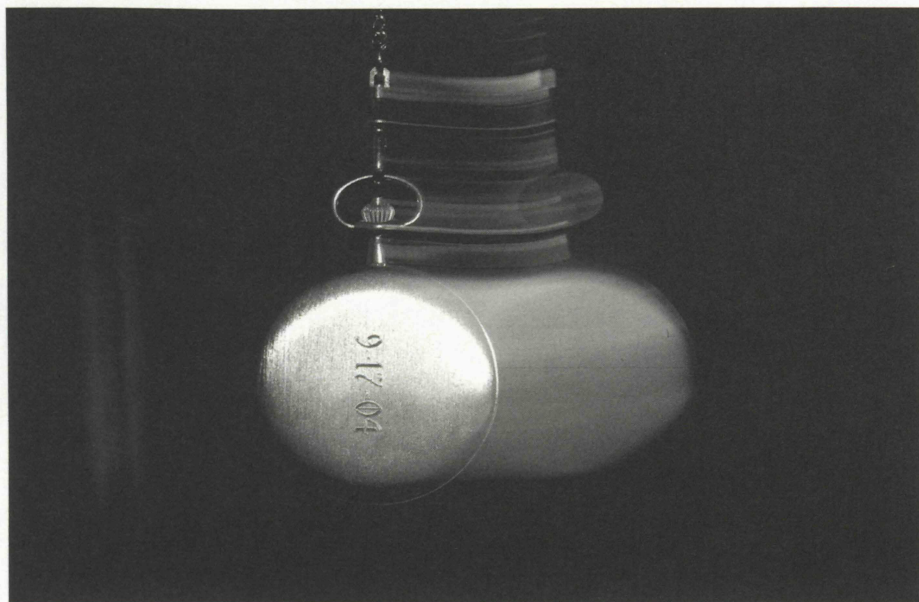
Michelle Martel

Dark Passenger

Linda Bresnahan

The first warning
Sign
Of this dark passenger
Surfaces
Soundlessly.
Loneliness
Switched to
Never
Leaving you.
And then it
HIT
The fear of
A b a n d o n m e n t
Became reality
The impulsive necessity
To stay
Because warmth was
Always there
Sunk in.
The coldness
Of your emotions
Told her she was
Useless and worthless.
But beheld in the mirror
Exposed that
She destroyed

Her nature
All by
Herself.
The scars,
The tears,
Rapid mood deviations,
Those weren't your burden
It was this brain
This brain that is
Ever so defining
And controlling.
This dark passenger
Embedded in the brain.
Caused the end
The boiling anger
Deep within
Is what ended
Her.



Jessica Healy



Michelle Martel

Snow Blankets

Jack Williams

astounding velvety white wafers,
floating down as delicate parachutes,

ornate little hankies but lighter,
gently alighting on the cold earth,

wrapping around the pebbles,
like candy wrappers but softer,

we welcomed these friendly aliens,
with big smiles from deep within

that covered up all of our worries
as we abandoned our work for a little while,

running around breathing the fresh air
and excitedly chattering like little children



Michelle Pellegrino

Where We Stand

Michaela Hoffman

"What's wrong with you
and your generation?" They ask me,
"Where are the picket signs
and megaphones
that shook the streets
in my time?"

"You are strangers to the neon light
that beams from the eyes of activists," they say,
"You,
children of the keyboard-corn,
Facebook Frankensteins,
will rot away sitting
before ever taking a stand."

At first, I swallowed their words
and lumbered, arms out
to class
but then I heard my heartbeat
and it reeled me back to my past....

Weaned on a screen,
my first friends were Arthur, Blue,
and Tommy Pickles.
Their bright faces looked up at me
every day

from cereal aisles,
pencil boxes,
and tennis shoes.

Their jokes enlivened soccer practice
and through them, I made new friends.
They made my world as colorful
as a pack of skittles:

Taste the rainbow... Barbie's new beetle, driving you wild.... /Welcome to Mario Kart/
they're magically delicious, I'm a Toys R Us Kid... Who lives in a pineapple under the
sea...

we love to see you smile,
Timmy is an average kid

that no one understands.

Sorry, Mr. Washington,
for not knowing your face.
But you never come to my house
like Ronald does.

I wasn't fed
your facts
like nuggets
dipped in ketchup.

School clocks spun faster,
and suddenly my screens dimmed.

Now, we eat dinner
watching kids holding guns
in Iraq.

So sad, we say. And keep eating...

Next up: The national debt ceiling... Big banks are being bailed out...
gas prices at all-time high job security is low sexual harassment in the Army...
Trayvon Martin... millions of Americans without health insurance.... Walmart forces
small business shutdown... The Boston Marathon bombings...
two murders down the street from you....

Chhhhhhhhhh (white noise).....

The screens have multiplied
like houseflies
eying me from every room.
So sad, so sad so sad I say to them
like a device they can control.

The volume grows
because Mom can't hear it.
Somehow I shrink.

But underneath this cyber-tyranny
my generation has built an underground railroad.
Here, we spend days creating artwork for deviantart,
writing Fan-fiction, blogging, selling crafts on Etsy,
signing petitions on Change.org, and following TV series
with characters as friendly and familiar

as the ones on our pencil boxes
long ago.

We've created our own world
beneath the screens,
one of freedom, connection,
and flashlights.

It's a place where the flies can't buzz
and you can't venture.

Here is where we hold our picket signs

and here is where we stand.



Michael Fillyaw

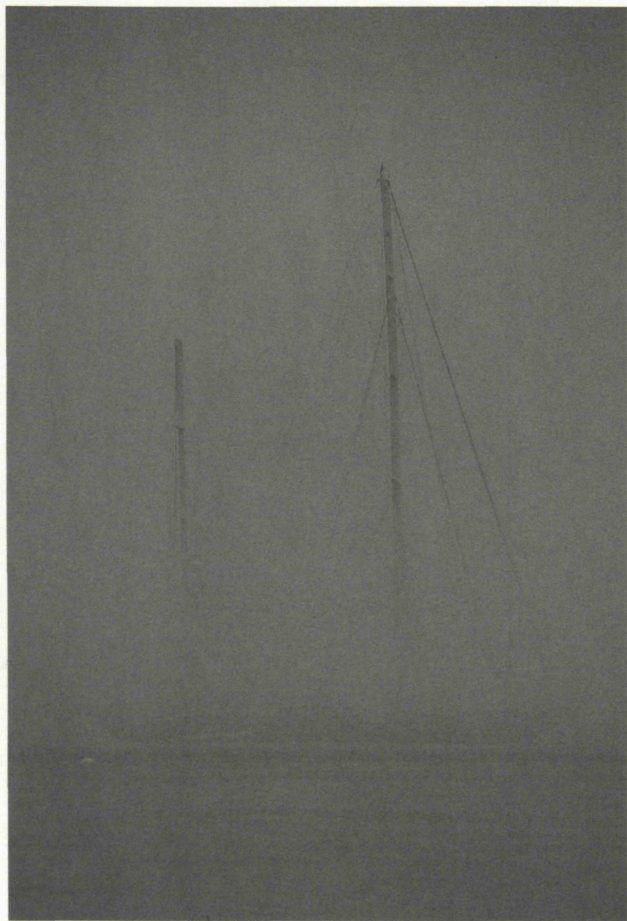


Raymond Nill

Sleeplessness

Taylor Knapczyk

Its 5am I'm up again,
Sleepless nights they always win,
I lay down in silence and darkness,
Hoping for sleep so bliss.
I have tried it all
from warm milk, pills to watching snow fall.
Nothing seems to alleviate
Not even when I mediate
This is my curse from now till the end
For sheep to count it's time to send.
Tossing and turning
While my mind still churning,
Its hot no its cold
This feeling is really getting old.
Well now I feel I can slumber
Screw counting sheep I forget the number.



Michael Fillyaw

Someone Has to Own This

Krystal Filsinger

Close your eyes;

Yes, do it.

Just peer into a set of out-of-focus binoculars

Just as breaths of darkness

breathe.

They breathe..

though every glimpse

viewed through glances;

where?

The wrong end;

of course.

Eyes...they shut hard

for

they

are

out

of

focus

lenses appear—

backwards

hiding among sights

darkness

but the darkness....

This darknes

Only if.

how

Only why
they open
wide open
landing.

A sharp flight into focus—
lenses flipped
around and yes.

The sun—
It rises.

There you
am—
as

There I
are.

Am I
there?

or

Are you
here?

This binocular view
appears
as

an abandoned puzzle.

Worn with longevity as
weary weeds grow--
the pieces.

they lay.

They lay lonely,
they rest
a top

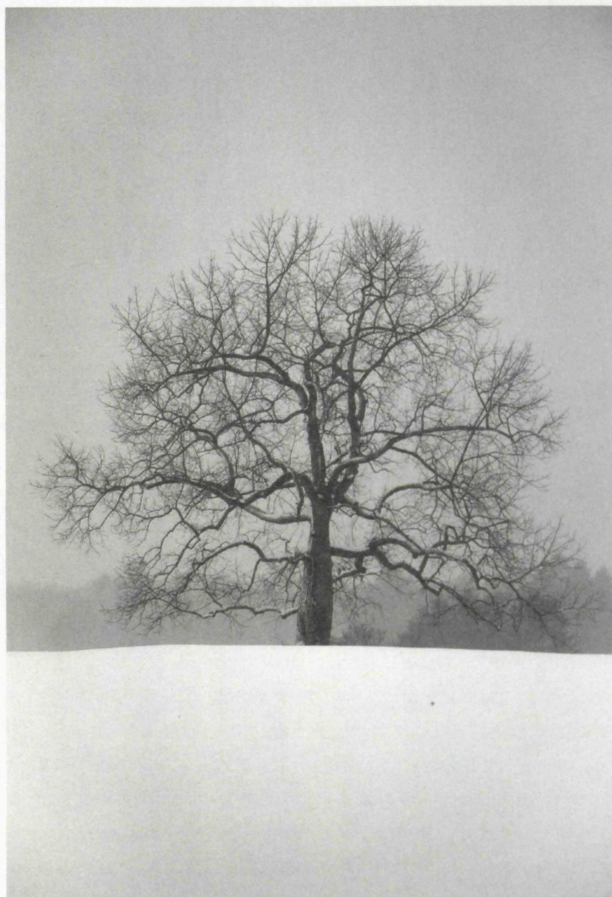
the
table.
Never put back
away
not aside
Overgrowing, overgrown—
with dust.
A competitive desire simply to..
fit.
Perhaps,
silently.
Some missing
and some lost.
Deformed,
filled up on neglect
of who they once were.
Disbelieving fingers
attempt
they try
they shoot for one—
this final chance.
Confirmation
or
proof they do,
indeed:
fit.
They used to.
They used to fit.
A growing whisper—
at last.

Eyes open slow
The smell of focus is close
The aging sun slouches
as faint glitter streams across--
lenses.

Simultaneously risen;
a silent epiphany.



Michelle Pellegrino



Michael Fillyaw

A Moonlit Rendezvous

Paige Massingale

The night was surprisingly cool compared to the normally humid Kolkata during the day. It didn't matter though; she wasn't going to be outside much longer. Running across rooftops she could see that she was nearing her final destination: the Kolkata Museum of Modern Art; and currently home to the famous Kolkata Gem...at least if it were the real gem. From what she had gathered through her intel the gem was actually a replica that had been crafted around fifty years ago by a young jewel maker requested by a rich client; however, the client passed away before he could collect both the original gem and the replica and so the jewel maker kept both for himself for his own little collection.

Years later another client came having heard about the original gem being in the jewel maker's possession, the client hoped to purchase it from the man and have it displayed in his museum. The jewel maker was happy to sell the original gem to the client, whom he felt was a good and honest man as well as generous as the price he offered the jewel maker was more than enough to allow him to spend the rest of his days without ever having to worry about finances. However, the jewel maker was unable to tell the difference between the original and the replica as he had created the replica to be an almost perfect copy of the original. Following his instincts the jewel maker sold the client what he believed to be the original gem, while he kept the replica. Unfortunately his instincts were incorrect and he accidentally sold the replica to his client but before he could correct his mistake the original gem was stolen, the criminal never found. This caused the jewel maker to become depressed from the guilt he felt from selling his client the replica and having the original stolen.

Eventually the jewel maker passed away with his children the only ones to know about the gems. His youngest son, wanting to correct his father's mistake, began to search for the client with the replica gem. It turns out the client had passed away only a few years after acquiring the gem, it was then auctioned off at the client's estate auction before it was passed through many other owners, until finally the curator from the Indian Museum

purchased it. The son went to the curator and explained what had happened and that the gem he possessed was not the original. The son hoped that the curator would return the gem so that no one at the museum would continue to be deceived. The curator, however, refused and even revealed that he already knew the gem was a fake –as were many of the other artifacts– but that it didn't matter it would still make him a great profit and no one would know the difference. Appalled the son went to the police and told them what he had heard in the hopes that they would be able to get the gem, sadly there was no evidence to back up the son's explanation and so he was dismissed by the police as a liar.

In a twist of fate she had actually come across the original gem in one of her travels and had contacted the jewel maker's family where she had gathered her information. She also did a little bit of research on the museum curator and found that he was known for illegally buying and selling fake pieces of art to criminals and thieves in the black market. After learning of the gems' corrupted past as well as the dark dealings of the curator she decided it was time for Kali to pay the museum a visit.

This is exactly what she was doing now as she leaped across two buildings, landing safely on the other side where she came to a stop at the other edge of the roof looking across at the Indian Museum. While it was long past the museum's closing there were police officers guarding the outside perimeter, not surprising as they most likely figured out her little riddle as to where she would strike next. Of course the extra security wouldn't make that much of difference, she had been eluding Interpol for years; her only reason for even giving them hints as to where her next target would be was to provide her some small amount of entertainment... and to see if they could ever actually give her a challenge.

From her spot she could easily see the entrances that were being guarded so that helped narrow down her options on how she was getting inside. Removing the backpack she was carrying, she unzipped the top and took out the blueprints she found of the building. Laying it flat on the roof she first marked where the gem was in the museum and then she searched the blueprints to see if there were any air-ducts that she could possibly enter through that would lead her to the room the gem was in. There was;

however, a quick look down at the building revealed that the air-duct was being guarded by a lone police officer. No matter, she had a plan that would get her inside without a problem. Glancing at the blueprints one last time to see if there were any cameras close by, she was pleased to find there were none –at least none that had a wide enough range to capture any movement she made– which made her plan even simpler.

Rolling the blueprints up, she tucked them into her bag again before zipping it up and throwing it over her shoulders. Crouching down so there was no chance any police could spot her she made her way to the side of the building where there were emergency stairs leading down to the adjacent alley. Once on the ground she made sure to stay hidden within the shadows as she made her way towards the police officer until she was only a few feet away. From her new vantage point she could see that the officer was not only fairly young –perhaps only a year or so older than her– but he also looked to be a new recruit, which made her plan even easier.

Checking the area once more to make sure no other officers were nearby and the cameras weren't facing her direction she picked up a small pebble that was lying nearby and tossed it at the garbage cans that were to her left. The noise caught the officer's attention, who looked around nervously before he made his way over to investigate. She waited until he was in just the right spot, then slowly so as not to make any noise and draw his attention she crept up behind him, a handkerchief lightly soaked in chloroform in her right hand, until she was close enough that she could grab him from behind and place the handkerchief over his mouth and nose. He struggled for a few seconds, long enough for the chloroform to enter his body and knock him out. Once she was sure he was completely out, she carefully set him on the ground and hid him behind the garbage cans so that should any other officers come by they wouldn't be able to see him, at least not unless they were trying to look for him.

Doing a quick search of his pockets she discovered a key card to the museum, which would definitely come in handy for her escape. Once she was satisfied that the young officer was hidden and wouldn't be waking up soon, she checked the area once more and seeing that the coast was clear she headed towards the air duct. Reaching into the

back pocket of her black shorts she removed the Swiss army knife she carried with her religiously and flipping open the knife she used it to remove the screws in the air duct cover. Once the screws were gone she slowly removed the cover to the air duct, just to make sure no noise of was made, and set it to the side before she began to crawl inside the air duct.

The air duct wasn't very wide but thanks to her small frame it wasn't too tight of a fit so she was still able to move somewhat freely without making a sound. Having memorized the location of the gem she started crawling through the vent, listening as she went in case she managed to catch any movement or conversation underneath her. Despite her steady pace it took her somewhere around ten to fifteen minutes –her body covered in a light sheen regardless of the light clothing she wore of sweat– before she knew she had reached the room the gem was located. Looking through the cracks in the vent she made sure there was no one walking by before opening the air duct and gracefully dropping down to the ground.

The room was filled with beautiful paintings and tapestries hanging from the wall while numerous platforms held ancient weapons, books, scrolls, jewelry and of course the Kolkata gem. Although she would have loved to take the time to admire the beauty and history that graced this room, she knew her time was running out and she needed to find the platform that held the Kolkata gem. Making her way through the room she glanced at the tags on each platform dismissing them as she passed until she found the one she was looking for. She could feel the excitement start to build in her veins; this was one of her favorite moments, when she was standing in front of her prize and it was too late for the police to stop her. Peering into the glass case she was greeted to the site of... an empty case? No, that wasn't true; the case wasn't completely empty there seemed to be a note, addressed to her, sitting inside where the gem should have been. Removing the glass she snatched the note from the case and as fast as her fingers could move she ripped it open and began to read.

She couldn't believe what she was reading! With every word she read she could feel her fury rise until she was practically seeing red. Crumbling the note in her hand, she took a few deep breathes in an attempt to calm herself but was interrupted by shouts

from the police as they burst through the entrance, the sound of the doors slamming against the wall echoing in the room. The voices of the police continued to rise; intermingling with one another as shouts of: "Freeze!!" "You're under arrest!" "We've finally caught you, Kali!" "There's no escaping now!" surrounded her.

A quick glance around the room she could see that in their excitement the police had failed to surround her from behind leaving her at least one escape route; provided she didn't do anything to mess it up. Shooting them a smirk, she replied, "You guys? Catch me? You must be dreaming! As if I'd ever let myself be caught by the likes of you!!"

Pivoting on her heel she started running towards the vent she entered through, from behind she could hear the police clamoring about in shock as they attempted to chase after her but it was too late as she had gained enough momentum to jump and grab a hold of the vent and hoist herself inside, crawling back the way she came as fast as she could this time without a care if she made any noise or not. It took her less time to get out of the museum then it did to get in. Thankfully, her escape had been quick as there weren't any police waiting outside for her but she wasn't about to wait for them to come out and get her so as soon as her feet hit the ground she took off running as fast as her legs could carry her until she felt she was a safe distance away. Scanning the area she found a secluded alleyway, which looked dark enough that she could blend into the shadows and hide out for a bit giving her time to change and head back to her hotel before the police came to search the area.

Setting her backpack on the ground she unzipped the front pocket and removed a pair of jean shorts and plain white t-shirt that had "I <3 Kolkata" written across the front in black letters as well as a pair of cheap flip flops, an outfit a typical American tourist would wear and despite the late hour, an inconspicuous disguise. Ripping off her shirt she tossed it to the ground and put on the new t-shirt before yanking off her shorts. The sudden movement caused something to fall from her pocket. Picking it up she realized it was the note she had found in the Kolkata gem's case, which only caused her anger from before to spark back to life. Pulling the new pair of shorts on she glared at the note and hissed, "Nobody makes a fool out of the world's number one thief, Kali and gets away with it. If it's a fight you want, it's a fight you'll get."

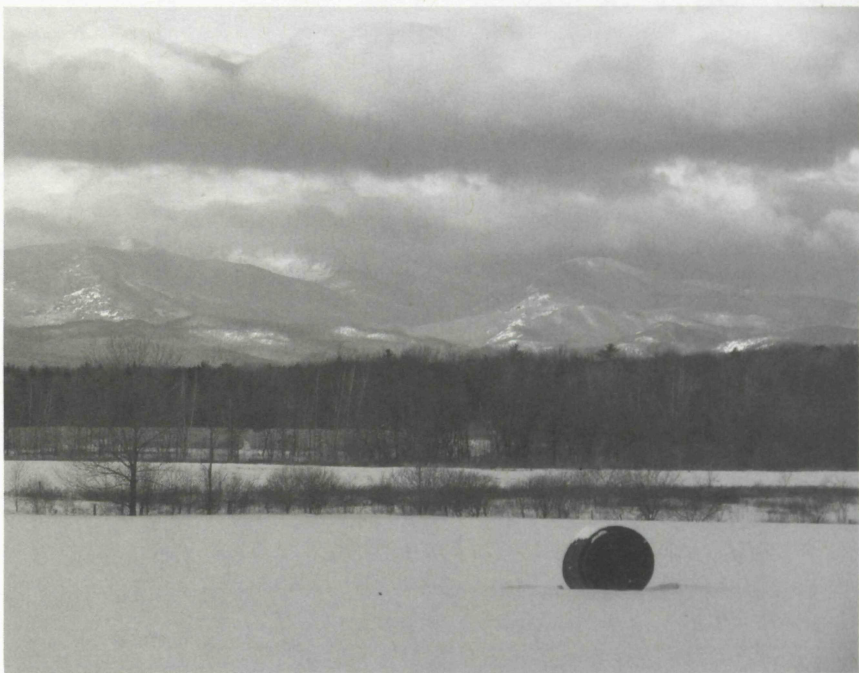


Michelle Martel

Jagged

Erin Viens

- Jagged screws sticking out of the walls of the box which consumes my life
- Broken glass beneath my feet
- Each step bleeds more and more blood from my inner most nightmares that compel me to do my worst
- With eyes closed I wonder through my thoughts and try to find a way out
- But all hope is lost
- Choking myself with the hands I was born with
- The ones that hang by my side
- Now are tortured by the mind that controls them
- My mind
- Forever lost in the abyss of true emotion which clings and feeds off of innocence
- The untamable self-control is what's lacking in today's presence of man
- The unholy steps that have been laid out in front for all to behold
- Marked with my red blood, that stains the ground that we all have to walk



Raymond Nill

The Cure

Linda Bresnahan

Crowded rooms,
Crammed spaces,
Can you feel it setting in?
It's creeping up the stairs
Searching for you.
It clings to you
Like a sweater.
It desires you
And only you,
But why?
It is the predator
And you are its prey.
When no one understands,
And you're deemed crazy,
When the moonshine
Is your best friend,
And your tears never stop flowing,
Do you believe in the cure?
Is the cure real,
Or is it make believe?
Only you know.
Slow lagging days,
Are you typical life,
While this disease,
Has become your wife.
You're secretly attached

And yet no one cares.
They don't believe
You've been taken over by a demon.
I have become a monster,
Who needs its cure.
Now that the monster
Has been tamed
My soul has been restored.
I can see again
But I need more time
To fully defeat
The demon
Who lives inside me.
He will not overcome me,
I will not break.



Michelle Pellegrino

Short Lived Poetry Relapse on the Fourteenth Night of the Tenth Month in the Two Thousand and Eleventh Year

Krystal Filsinger

Racing thoughts
these knots
of nots
pull tighter
as the moon was full
only two nights prior
long nights, long knives
slice
sour lacerations,
into a brownish,
almost rotten-
lemon

First Jump

Jack Williams

The highest three feet
you can imagine.
Only four steps up,
then walk the plank
and jump.

Soft water and
welcoming arms.
How hard can that be?
I watched the others do it.
It seemed so easy.

Until I get up to the ladder.

It's hard to describe
eternity
in every step

a skinny little birch with my
innermost leaves shaking...
an extremeness with
every molecule
anxiously trembling...
overpowering weak knees
permeating my entirety...
no conscious thoughts

as distant voices
pass directly through me unheard...
my gut a tensely twisted knot
with my dry withered throat
tangled in my spineless legs
as a tightly anchored coil...
intense panic
of my central cells
pulling me
into shreds
between pleasing
and escape.

I have come to the edge!
How did I get here?
What will I do now?



Raymond Nill



Jessica Healy

Heart to Heart

Linda Bresnahan

Does it hurt to watch her cry?
Can you feel her soul
Slowly start to die?
As you watch her innocent tears
Flow in an endless stream,
Does it make you want to scream?
The disorder has changed your girl.
All her emotions
Constantly spin and whirl.
This is how her brain sees it,
And you can't help but through a fit,
Because the pain she feels
You know is completely real
And you feel utterly helpless
Knowing you cannot bring her
Pure bliss.
And so she wonders every day
If you know the words
She's trying to say.
Just know this is not your fault
Even though you feel so,
Within your vault.



Michael Fillyaw

Oh Brother!

Jack Williams

Many's the day I wish
I could be that child again.
The one with no real worries.

Hours on end of plastic soldiers
locked in bloodless battles.
Endless playing on the bridge
with Pooh and Rabbit,
as Poohsticks and
Poor Eeyore go floating by.

King of the mountain on haystacks.
Climb up, roll down.
Up and down again and again, itching.
Running around and around to exhaustion.

Cannonballs and torpedoes at the pool.
Day after day.
Meandering home red-eyed whenever,
in time for Mama's comforting meals.
Tucked in tight at night with a gentle kiss.

When does it end, this careless innocence?
I mean, what day exactly?
Do we intentionally leave it behind
as the embarrassing garbage of being a child

when we start playing grownup for real?

Or does it gradually dissipate
as we nervously embrace the new adventures
of growing up,
subtly tracked in the mire and bogs
of their expectations?

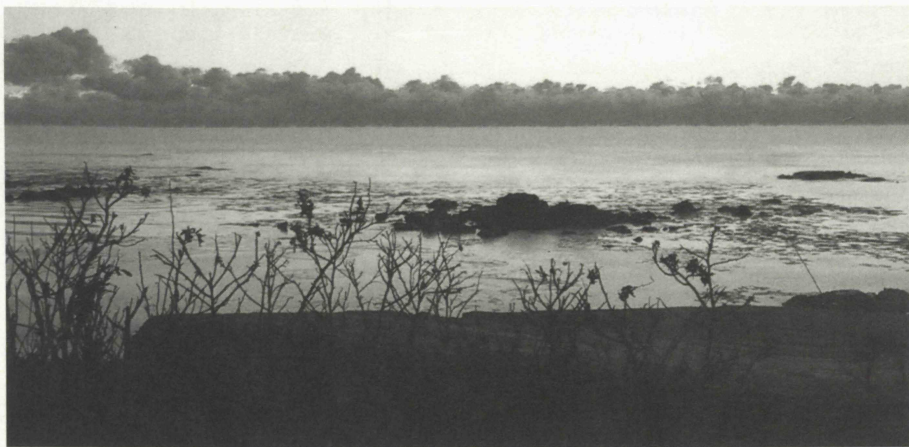
Is it really gone, that innocence?
Or just buried in noisy incessancy,
as a meek little mouse
too timid to wander far from
the security of its quiet nest.

One tentative step at a time
back into balance.
Then another and another.
Then scurry across the bridge
to drop a fir cone upstream.
Then drop two to see
Who comes out first.

Do we really ever forget
how play Poohsticks?



Raymond Nill



~ Lin ~

Gone

Amber Leslie

Feeling exhausted, heavy and worn, she stood in the dark at the window, staring outside. A light wind was now blowing, leaves were swaying together in a slow melancholy dance. Listening to the rain, she knew it was almost time to go. The single streetlight flickered, matching the erratic pace of her heartbeat. She fingered the top button of her coat, contemplating switching it out for the heavier one. Biting her lip, she settled on the one she wore. In an attempt to calm herself, she ran her hands down the front of the cotton jacket, momentarily smoothing the creases. Feeling like she needed to keep her shaky hands busy, she pushed the curtain further to the side and bunched the fabric in her fingers. It wasn't a particularly heavy cloth, but it quickly warmed in her grasp. It wasn't until this moment that she realized how heavily she was sweating, despite the cool October air that had taken hold of the quiet house. The black of the night seemed to steady her. She took a deep breath, inhaled slowly, and imagined the darkness drawing close, swirling, entering her body through her nose, inching its way to her lungs. Settling deep inside, comfortable, there was a recognition of the darkness that already existed within her.

Something outside caught her eye. Covering her mouth and stifling a cry, she glanced down the hall behind her. Nothing. No sounds. Exhaling loudly, she turned back to the window and noticed the cat. This sudden creature slinked across the greasy blacktop and disappeared into the shadows. She wasn't the only one up after all. She wondered where the cat was headed. Had he just finished hunting? Was he looking for a warm safe place to rest? Straining her eyes, leaning further into the window, she hoped to catch another glimpse of the wandering animal. She suddenly felt frantic, searching the darkness for her co-conspirator. Not finding the feline anywhere she let her mind wander to her own impending absence. It wouldn't be long before she was gone. Gone. That's what she would be. In the days to come others might use the word missing, but she knew the truth. Gone felt more appropriate. The irony was not lost on her, as she thought about

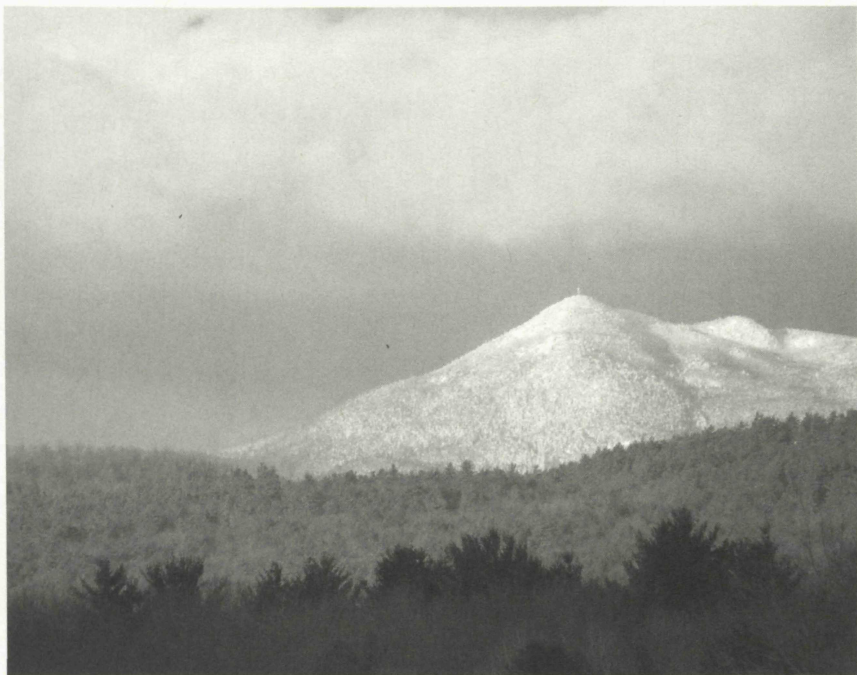
how similar she was to that cat, about to slip into the shadows. Could she slink away unnoticed so easily? No, she would be missed. It was this knowledge that pained her the most in this moment.

The loud grandfather clock in the hall rang three times, a low and ominous sound, reminding her it was time to go. Sighing, she turned and took one last look at the room, attempting to take in every detail in hopes of creating a memory that would last forever. She would need it over the coming days. Months? Years? She wasn't sure. Feeling like a frightened child, she found herself smoothing her jacket again. Attributing this to her nerves, she knew it didn't matter what she looked like. Nobody was waiting for her outside. Nobody inside knew she was leaving. A cool rush of air met her as she opened the door. Stepping outside she momentarily considered the warmer jacket again. Go, she told herself. Struggling to find her courage, she scolded herself for hesitating. I don't have a choice, she reminded herself. Do it. Move. Be gone. With a deep breath she pulled the door tight behind her, hearing it latch. Her movements felt surreal, like a dream, like she was watching herself from above. Taking one step, then another, she walked off the porch and began her journey.

Back in the house, a small child sat on the stairs in the dark. She had managed to remain unnoticed even though she was sure that her thundering heartbeat would give her away. Twirling her hair and biting her lip, a single tear ran down her smooth warm cheek. Unable to move, her mind raced. After what felt like an eternity, a whisper escaped her tiny trembling lips. "Mommy?" Quietly she started to slide herself down the stairs. First one step, then another. The pink slippers on her feet gripped the stair tread, steadying her as she descended. When she reached the bottom, she slowly dropped to her knees. Scared, she wanted to make herself as small as possible. What if her mother was still on the porch and saw her through the window? She'd be in trouble for sure if she was caught out of bed. Crawling to the window, the occasional tear still rolling down her cheek, she wiped at her nose and sniffled gently. Reaching the window where her mother had stood moments before, she pulled herself up to sitting, her knees underneath her. She moved the curtain aside to create an opening just wide enough for one eye. She couldn't see anything. Moving the curtain further, she took in the scene

outside. Seeing that her mother was not on the porch created a hard feeling in her stomach. Was it relief that she wasn't caught or worry because her mother was really gone?

It was raining heavily now. The streetlight cast an eerie glow on the front yard and she almost didn't recognize the tree that held her tire swing. It looked scary in the dark. The last leaf had fallen days ago and the scraggly branches reached out in all directions, twisting and turning, pointing to the sky, to the house, to the street corner. Were they trying to tell her where her mother had gone. She almost cried out loud. Where did she go, Mr. Tree? There was no sign of her anywhere. Just as she had given up and started to close the curtain she saw the cat. He was sitting across the street and seemed to be looking right at her. He was almost invisible in the inky darkness. His green eyes fixed on her watery blue ones. They sat there staring at each other, neither of them moving, both of them witness to her mother's departure. The little girl didn't know it yet, but for many years to come, she would dream about this night. About her mother standing at the window. About the tree and its unfortunate inability to speak. About that cat and its staring eyes. About the night that changed everything.



Raymond Nill



Mik Morrissey

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